

Bleachers by flippyspoon

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Summary:

Now when Billy is angry, somebody's there to calm him down. Now when Steve is panicked, somebody is there to calm him down.

Bleachers

Author's Note:

This has been languishing for the longest because it was supposed to be a sequel to Sat on a Fence But It Don't Work and then I just couldn't finish it- I think because originally I was going to write more at length and do an ending that didn't excite me very much. So just now I thought hell I'll just end it at this bleacher scene because the story's not getting better than that and it doesn't really need more actually. So I know it's just a little ficlet but anyway. It can still be seen as a sequel to Sat on a Fence I spose (but it's so short I didn't post it as such 'officially').

Fuck fuck fuck. Fuck everybody.

Billy was pissed and it was barely eight o'clock in the morning. His car smelled funny because Max had spilled a milkshake in it the week before and it hadn't been probably cleaned up and he wanted to scream at Max until she was as upset as he was but he also really didn't if only because Max being on his side wasn't so bad.

"What happened to the radio?" Max said.

Billy breathed hard through his nose and gripped the steering wheel harder and harder until his fingers were aching.

Max read his mood quickly enough and said, "Nevermind. Forget it."

He let her go without a word and then he stood around scanning for Steve and lit a cigarette. It was going to be warm again. Hawkins warm meant humid. It wasn't like regular California heat; dry, breezy, overly friendly to fires. Hawkins heat meant an uncomfortable kind of clamminess that made you want to change your shirt every few hours. Billy wore a white t-shirt and no jacket, though the early morning was still cool. He stomped his feet and grit his teeth and smoked.

Where the fuck was fucking Steve?

He needed to see Steve or there was going to be some shit. He hadn't been this pissed in a while, he felt like he was walking on a thread over fire.

Everything had been gone when he'd come back home the night before.

Strictly speaking, not everything. Only his records, his tapes, his record player, his tape-deck, his walkman. His father had ransacked the room for music and taken it all way.

He'd been breaking curfew.

Billy had been going out a lot; always with Steve. Billy had also been cutting Max all kinds of slack because he'd been happier lately and when he was happier he didn't feel like making Max miserable even if his dad wanted him to enforce his stupid rules. His dad seemed to sense the two of them were friendlier than not. He supposed Neil wanted to divide and conquer. Maybe that was why he'd imposed Max's curfew on Billy even though Max was thirteen and Billy would be eighteen soon. Asshole.

Billy kept A. forgetting and B. not caring.

His room looked like it had been torn up by a S.W.A.T. team. Not that it was hard to clean up his paltry amount of possessions. Half of it had been music. Now the music was gone.

Neil wouldn't say what he'd done with any of it. It was probably all crushed up at the junkyard.

"Son of a bitch! You goddamn son of a bitch!"

So Billy also had a bruise on his cheek.

Then Neil had wiped the car of everything else including the radio.

Fuck him fuck him fuck everybody. Where is Steve.

Billy didn't see Steve before class. He was missing from first period. They didn't have second period together and he didn't see Steve in the hall. In third period Billy felt like a coiled spring about to bust

and then finally Harrington walked in, his eyes immediately finding Billy's. Billy watch his brows turn down.

They'd gotten close enough that they could recognize when the other was upset even if their tells weren't obvious.

"Where've you been?" Billy hissed as Steve sat down beside him.

"Needed a jump," Steve said. "Beemer died halfway to school. Are you alright?"

"Hargrove. Harrington. Eyes forward, please."

Steve inched his desk closer while appearing to pay close attention. They were nearer the back of the class. Somebody could possibly see Steve's ankle hooked around Billy's, the way their knuckles brushed when they hung their arms off the desk at an awkward angle. It helped a little. It was what Billy did for Steve when he was starting to panic in class.

But Billy didn't have fourth period with Steve and there was no time to talk and he had forty-five minutes to get all riled up again.

Then Tommy had to go...existing.

Billy didn't need a reason. All he needed was Tommy, striding towards him with his punchable face, to check him in the shoulder. It had likely not been deliberate. For sure, Tommy knew better.

"Watch where you're goin', asshole!" Billy exploded, shoving him as he turned.

He was no longer on particularly friendly terms with Tommy. Not since he'd started hanging around with Steve. He wasn't even sure which of them had become hostile first.

Tommy's face screwed up into a sneer. "Oh, get AIDS," he cracked.

FUCK HIM FUCK HIM FUCK HIM FUCK EVERYBODY

Thing was, it really didn't matter what Tommy said, and he hadn't said it with any real knowledge of Billy or his relationship to Steve.

But it was certainly good enough reason for a fight.

Billy felt hot rage coursing through him and he pulled back for a punch and then somebody was grabbing his arm, twisting him around.

“Stop!”

He almost punched the guy when he spun. He was so close to punching Steve again. He would lose his shit beyond fixing if he ever hurt Steve again.

“Get the fuck back, Harrington! Fuck off!”

“Stop!” Steve was gripping his shoulders. He looked a little panicked. Some part of Billy still being reasonable did not want to ever make Steve panic. “Stop, just stop!”

“Get off me!” Billy shook, felt his heart pounding. It had been startling to realize that when he got like this it was a lot like when Steve flipped out because he thought there were wild dogs in the walls or was suddenly afraid he was dying.

“I just get angry sometimes,” Billy had once said softly as Steve traced circles on his chest. “Lose my shit. See red, I guess. Like I have to...like somebody’s trying to kill me or something. Flip out. Get all sweaty and shaky sometimes and I can’t breathe.”

“Yeah...” Steve had looked up at him as if breaking some hard news. “Most people don’t get angry like that.”

In the hallway, Tommy had not yet run. He looked frozen as if confronted by a rabid dog. He could still-

“Do you really want the heat for this! For that douchebag?” Steve was rubbing his upper arms. Which might’ve looked weird to somebody watching. Tommy was getting away. Fuck. “Just c’mon! C’mon with me. Fuck him.” He had his arm around Billy, still clenching his fists. Steve was walking him to the doors out to the baseball diamond behind the school but Billy punched a locker on his way out and the pain of it was a kind of comfort. “*Stop*. Jesus. Take a deep breath, yeah? C’mon. Let’s walk. Cool off, man.”

“Fuck.”

“Yeah.” Steve squeezed his shoulder and rubbed the back of his neck as they walked out. “C’mon outside.”

Steve walked him aimlessly around the baseball diamond and told him to breathe. Otherwise, they didn’t talk. It was warm now; humid. Billy’s shirt stuck to his skin and Steve’s palm was hot on his neck but that was good too.

“Okay okay,” Billy muttered. He nodded towards the bleachers. Steve walked ahead of him and found a shady spot where there was still growing grass in the shadows of the bleachers and he plopped down. Billy considered him for a second and nudged Steve’s feet apart with his boot so Steve’s legs were spread and then he sat down between them. Steve sat forward a little to encircle Billy in his arms.

“He hit you, I know that,” Steve murmured, and Billy felt a soft touch on his cheek near his bruise.

Billy turned his head and fell back into Steve. “He took all my shit,” Billy said.

Billy could feel him breathing and shut his eyes, focusing on the arms holding him. Steve started petting his hair like he was a bristling horse. He felt his pounding heart began to calm. He rubbed the palm of his hand.

“How do you mean?” Steve said.

“The music,” Billy said, choking on it. “All my shit. All my records, all my tapes, my radio...My car radio. He threw everything out.”

“Shit,” Steve whispered, hugging his waist with both arms. “That *sucks*.”

“Yeah, I...” He was looking down at Steve’s hands, gently resting on his stomach, the palms were an angry pink and he took them gently and turned them over even as he heard Steve inhale and pull them back. “Steve, what the hell’s going on with your hands?”

Steve’s hands were badly blistered, as if he’d been working heavy

construction for days with no gloves; torn up little pockets of skin on his palms and the pads of his fingers. It looked like agony.

“It’s not a big deal,” Steve said quietly. “I just didn’t have anything to put on em’ this morning.”

Billy held his wrists, grimacing down at his hands. He was careful not to touch them, they looked so tender.

“When did this happen?” Billy said. “How?”

“It’s fine,” Steve said, sounding so small. “Forget it.”

“The bat,” Billy said, and Steve yanked his hands back, looking pained.

“I sleep with it,” Steve said, his mouth twisted up as he gazed down at his palms. “I guess I held it too tight in my sleep last couple nights. And I was dreaming, ya know...demodogs. Woke up like this.”

“Jesus,” Billy muttered.

“I know, I know.” Steve turned away. “Fucking basketcase...”

Billy wasn’t accustomed to being careful with people. Nobody was careful with him, unless they were afraid and then it was as if he was a bomb that might go off at any time. But there was something about Steve... Maybe it was partly because he’d hurt Steve so badly before, and when he thought about it now he sometimes had an urge to tell Steve he should stay away. But he never would, he didn’t have the nerve. Not when just looking into Steve’s soft brown eyes made him feel calmer, even though Steve himself was often not very calm.

“If you’re a basketcase, I’m definitely a basketcase,” Billy said, and held Steve’s wrists, caressing his pulse points.

“Coupla’ fruitcakes,” Steve said, and his knee came up to nudge Billy’s. “I don’t know if I can sleep without the bat.”

“I can’t sleep without listening to music. You can’t sleep *with* the bat. You’ll poke your eye out.”

“Yeah.”

“You should sleep with me,” Billy said.

“Gladly.”

“Well...I could,” Billy said, frowning down at their hands, hoping against hope Steve was serious. “Not tonight but like Friday would be alright? I could sneak out and get back early enough. They sleep late on Saturday.”

“Yeah?” Steve said, and Billy turned his head to see Steve softly smiling. “That’d be nice.”

“Okay,” Billy said, and turned his head back to hide the pleased little smile on his face. “If you’re good maybe I’ll bring a bottle.”

“Even better,” Steve said, and moved Billy’s hair to kiss his neck. “Lemme ask you something... What’re a few albums you really need? Like can’t live without...?”

“Why?” Billy said darkly.

“Maybe I have em’,” Steve said. “You could borrow them.”

“*You have Kill Em’ All and Back in Black?*”

“Well, I’ll look,” Steve said, sounding deceptively innocent. “Have a lot of stuff.”

“He took my mom’s shit even,” Billy muttered, stroking Steve’s knuckles in his lap. “*Pet Sounds*.”

“Jesus, what an asshole,” Steve said in a sigh. “Hey, will you really come Friday night?”

“Oh, I’ll come alright,” Billy said, his voice low as his smile widened to a grin. “At least twice.”

Steve chuckled into his neck and held him tighter, his blistered hands palms up as Billy held them in his and Billy looked down at those fucked up hands and imagined his own fucked up heart sitting in

them.

Steve was going to buy him new albums, probably on cassette because he'd probably also buy Billy a Walkman. There was nothing Billy could do to stop Steve making a gesture like that and he didn't particularly want to. But for the first time since the night before he wasn't angry about his music, or about his father, or about Tommy. Steve was holding him, warm around him, as he hummed softly in Billy's ear. That was the only music Billy needed for now. And then it went away because Steve was falling asleep and Billy felt the rise and fall of his chest, a comforting rhythm that he didn't know would be comforting him for decades to come. For now it was just Steve's warm heart beating as Billy's breath slowed, and his eyes slipped shut. And if they felt bad at all about missing fifth period following lunch, they certainly never let on.